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ABSTRACT

Knowledge about client expectations of counseling is important in its contribution to theory and practice, particularly for those ethnic and cultural populations presently underserved. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship among acculturation and expectations about counseling in a majority (non-Hispanic) and minority (Mexican-American) student population, and to compare United States student responses to those of a previous investigation among Mexican students in Yucata'n. The Expectations About Counseling-Brief Form (EAC-B) questionnaire and the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARMSA) were administered to 216 Mexican-American and 137 non-Hispanic U.S. students. Respondents' EAC-B responses were compared to those from 168 medical students and 95 psychology students who participated in previous investigations in Yucata'n, Mexico. Results suggest that the EAC-B and the ARSMA are viable instruments for the measurement and cross-societal comparison of expectations about counseling as they relate to acculturation. Significant differences were found among these samples in expressed expectations about counseling, with scores from Mexican-American students who reported higher acculturation being more similar to scores from the U.S. student group than to scores from the Mexican student group. (Author/ABL)

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Expectations About Counseling and Psychotherapy and Acculturation in Mexican-American Students

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Running Head: EXPECTATIONS AND ACCULTURATION IN MEXICAN-AMERICANS

Abstract

Knowledge about client expectations of counseling is important in its contribution to theory and practice, particularly for those ethnic and cultural populations presently underserved. The Expectations About Counseling-Brief Form (EAC-B) questionnaire and the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA) were administered to 350 Hispanic and U.S. students, and their EAC-B responses compared to those from previous investigations in Yucata'n, Mexico. Significant differences were found among these samples in expressed expectations about counseling, with students reporting higher acculturation more similar to the U.S. group than to the Mexican group.

Expectations have long been recognized as an important construct in psychology. Knowledge of client expectations of counseling is important in seeking to understand commonly held anticipations about the nature of counseling and the role of counselor and client. Knowledge about expectations may have important heuristic value as well in elucidating factors affecting interpersonal change processes in counseling and therapy.

Culture has been described as a set of learned meanings held in common by individuals within a social group (Rohner, 1984). Thus, cultural meanings would be expected to be reflected in expectations about psychological services. A prior review (Kunkel, Hector & Fray, 1985) has argued for the centrality of expectation research in cross-cultural investigation. With respect to counseling and psychotherapy in other societies, such investigations might clarify some vital conceptual questions: Are expressed expectations of psychological services universalistic and generalistic (cf. Pike, 1954), or do they vary consistently and predictably with cultural experience (Gaw, 1982)? How do client expectations reflect larger elements of culture, gender, and counseling experience (Rohner, 1984)? Can expectations about counseling expressed by "minority groups" in the United States be considered representative of expectations in their countries of origin?

The need for knowledge about expectations becomes particularly important in the application of counseling to non-

traditional populations such as "minority group" members residing in the United States. Members of such groups will inevitably possess complex cultural meanings, including attitudes, values and behavior, that influence and are reflected in their degree of acculturation to the mainstream society (Olmedo, 1979). One's level of acculturation, therefore, might be thought to influence his or her perspective on psychological services and be manifested in expectations about such services.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship among acculturation and expectations about counseling in a majority (non-Hispanic) and minority (Mexican-American) student population, and to compare U.S. student responses to those of a previous investigation among Mexican students in Yucata'n (Kunkel, Hector, Eli'as-Go'ngora & Castillo-Vales, in press). Influences of gender and previous counseling experience on expectations about counseling were also investigated. It was hoped that in so doing some preliminary perspectives might be obtained on the interplay of acculturation and expectations.

Method

Subjects

Participants in the study were self-identified Mexican-American students (n = 216), and non-Hispanic U.S. students (n = 137), the overwhelming majority of whom were Anglo-American. U.S. student responses were compared with those of a previous investigation in Me'rida, Yucata'n in which medical students (n = 168) and psychology students (n = 95) participated. Gender

distribution across all samples was approximately equal. Whereas a principal intent of the investigation was to investigate the relationship among acculturation, gender and prior counseling experience and expectations, sufficient participants in each category were sought so as to enable analysis of these relationships.

Instruments

The brief form of the Expectations About Counseling questionnaire (EAC-B; Washington & Tinsley, 1982) consists of 53 items, comprising 17 scales that tap various expectations about counseling. Each item on this form is prefaced by "I expect to" or "I expect the counselor to" and is responded to on a 7-point Likert continuum from definitely do not expect this to be true to definitely do expect this to be true. Areas to which items pertain include client attitudes and behavior, counselor characteristics, process characteristics, and quality of outcome. Several demographic items were included with the EAC-B. Each subject was asked to indicate gender, age category and student status. Each was also asked to indicate if he or she had ever been seen professionally by a psychologist.

The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans (ARSMA; Cuellar, Harris & Jasso, 1980) consists of 20 multiple-choice items intended to differentiate levels of personal affiliation with Mexican or United States societal values and roles. Five acculturation categories (Very Mexican, Mexican-Oriented, True Bicultural, Anglo-Oriented and Very Anglicized) have been used in previous investigations to efficiently describe acculturation

level. The ARSMA has been found to possess high internal consistency and construct validity and to be applicable across subject populations (Montgomery & Orozco, 1984). Although the items can be administered in either Spanish or English, the complete instrument was administered in its English version in the present investigation.

Procedure

Each subject completed the instruments anonymously in large group settings. The standard written instructions that accompany the EAC-B and the ARSMA were used.

In an effort to facilitate more insight into expectations, small-group discussion sessions were conducted by the investigators among most subjects following their completion of the instruments. An effort was made to encourage subjects to speak candidly about their impressions of the investigation, their expectations of counseling and the subjective meaning of such expectations.

Analysis

The distribution of previous experience with counseling was first evaluated by chi-square analysis across subject ethnic (i.e. Yucatecan, Mexican-American and U.S. non-Hispanic) and Lubbock acculturation groups. Variance of counseling experience across acculturation groups was found to be significantly different, with a significant positive relationship between counseling experience and more anglicized acculturation level.

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the product-moment Q correlations between the 20

ARSMA acculturation items for the U.S. sample. An additional factor analysis was conducted for the 17 scales of the EAC-B across all student groups. Three methods were used to locate the range of possible factor solutions: eigenvalues greater than one (the Kaiser criterion), Cattell's scree test, and analysis of the percentage of total variance accounted for by the factors. Complete results of these analyses are reported elsewhere.

A chi-square analysis was performed on the variance of acculturation between Lubbock student ethnic groups to test the null hypothesis that the distribution of acculturation in this sample was random. Subsequent decisions to employ acculturation vs. ethnic status as an independent variable were based on the results of this distribution.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedures were employed with the subjects' EAC-B scale scores as dependent variables to evaluate the hypothesized influence of gender and counseling experience and acculturation levels on expressed expectations. Following the MANOVAs, discriminant function analyses were performed to identify those acculturation and expectation variables that most clearly contributed to group differences.

Reports from the free-form inquiry sessions with some subjects were analyzed for consistent themes. Insights gleaned in the course of these sessions were used to assess overall subjective response, assist in evaluation of statistical trends and aid in interpretation of the data.

Results

Statistical Analysis Results

Results of factor analysis of the EAC-B across student groups and of the ARSMA in the U. S. student groups suggests that both instruments demonstrate a psychometric structure in the present samples similar to that in prior studies. This finding is encouraging in suggesting psychometric equivalence of the instrument and hints at common constructs of acculturation and commonalities in expectations about counseling across cultural meanings.

Results of the chi-square analysis for variance in acculturation scores between Lubbock student groups indicated that the variance in acculturation scores was significantly different between the Mexican-American and non-Hispanic groups (Kendall's Tau-b = .735, $p < .01$). A subsequent discriminant function analysis correctly assigned 94.5% of the Lubbock students to ethnic groups based on ARSMA scores. Thus, it was decided to employ acculturation score category rather than ethnic group membership in subsequent analyses.

Results of MANOVAs with Lubbock student subjects' EAC-B scale scores as the dependent variables suggested some significant areas of relationship among acculturation level, gender and prior counseling experience. There was no 3-way interaction. Acculturation and counseling experience interacted ($F [3,324] = 1.82$, $p < .01$) in their influence upon expectations, with univariate F-tests suggesting that expectations for counselor Acceptance, Empathy, Nurturance and Expertise

contributed maximally to the effect. Cell memberships were too small in some cases, however, to confidently interpret these effects. Acculturation level demonstrated an effect ($F [3, 324] = 1.90$, $p < .01$) on expectations for counselor Directiveness, Empathy and Expertise, with more Mexican-oriented subjects expressing significantly higher expectations for all variables. No gender influence was demonstrated overall on expectation scales across Lubbock student groups. Subjects without counseling experience showed significantly higher ($F [1,324] = 2.53$, $p < .01$) expectations for counselor Directiveness, Empathy, Expertise and Tolerance than did subjects with previous counseling experience.

For the entire student subject group (Lubbock Mexican-American, non-Hispanic, and Yucata'n medical and Yucata'n psychology students), MANOVAs demonstrated areas of influence of ethnic group, gender and counseling experience on EAC-B scale scores. No 2- or 3-way interaction was demonstrated. Group membership was found to exercise a significant effect ($F [1,332] = 1.35$, $p < .05$) on personal expectation for Openness; expectation for counselor behavior and characteristics such as Confrontation, Empathy, Genuineness, Nurturance, Self-Disclosure, Attractiveness, and Expertise; and expectation for the process of Immediacy and a positive Outcome. While these results will be more fully summarized elsewhere, some general trends emerged. In each case but for counselor Nurturance and Self-Disclosure, expectations of Mexican-American students were the lowest and those of the Yucata'n students highest. In every case but for

these two variables, the expectations of Mexican-American students were significantly more similar to those of non-Hispanics than they were to those of Yucata'n students. Gender influences across student groups were much more robust ($F [1,332] = 2.16$, $p < .01$) than in the Lubbock groups independently. Follow-up univariate F-tests revealed that males expressed significantly lower expectations than did females for personal Motivation, Openness, and Responsibility; and for counselor Acceptance, Confrontation, Genuineness, Attractiveness and Trustworthiness. Males across subject groups expressed significantly higher expectations than females for counselor Directiveness, Self-Disclosure and Expertise. Counseling experience exercised an effect across subject groups ($F [1,332] = 2.49$, $p < .01$). Subjects with prior experience in counseling expressed higher expectations for counselor Directiveness, Expertise and Tolerance. Significantly lower expectations for counselor Empathy, Self-Disclosure and Expertise were expressed by subjects with prior counseling experience.

In summary, psychometric equivalence of the EAC-B and the ARSMA was established, in such a way as to justify use of the instruments with these samples. Acculturation level and prior counseling/psychotherapy experience were found to exercise an effect jointly and interactively on expectations about counseling in the Lubbock sample groups. Across student sample groups in Lubbock and Mexico, ethnic group, gender and prior counseling experience each exercised an effect on

expectations about counseling. They were not found, however, to interact in their influence.

Results of Inquiry Sessions

Discussions with subjects centered around three inter-related topics: a) their reaction to participating in the investigation itself (i.e. process elements); b) their perception of the questionnaire; and c) subjective response to questions such as, "Under what circumstances might you go to see a psychologist?", "If you were to go, how would you expect to act?", "What would you expect the psychologist to do?", and other inquiries in response to topics presented within the sessions.

Several consistent themes emerged. With respect to ethnic group differences, Hispanic groups in the United States and in Yucata'n consistently voiced reluctance and guardedness with respect to counseling services. Little distinction among mental health service providers (e.g. psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers) was noted. The notion of a counselor as a stern and somewhat punitive judge was frequently mentioned, and Hispanic students expressed little verbal expectation of counseling as a positive and self-actualizing experience. In contrast, non-Hispanic U.S. students seemed more aware of distinctions among mental health providers and more receptive in general to such services. Counseling as a positive and personally gratifying experience was more frequently mentioned in non-Hispanic subject groups.

Males in follow-up interviews seemed less engaged than females in general in the process of the investigation, and less

open and enthusiastic in their perceptions. Counseling was viewed by females predominantly as an interpersonally oriented activity, while many males seemed to reflect a perception that was largely goal-directed and task-oriented.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the EAC-B and the ARSMA are viable instruments for the measurement and cross-societal comparison of expectations about counseling as they relate to acculturation. They also reveal several quite interesting areas of relationship among gender, acculturation and experience with counseling and expressed expectations about counseling.

It is interesting to note that in most expectation areas Mexican-American students were much more similar to their non-Hispanic U.S. counterparts than to Mexican students. Such a finding would tend to caution against the common tendency of viewing "international students" as representative of the ethnic group in which they may have ancestry.

Several cautions must be borne in mind in interpreting the results of this investigation. The sample was not random. Rather, it was stratified, with individuals enlisted from several representative groups. However, such a strategy excludes many possible subject groups and relied heavily upon educational networks in the United States and upon the social networks common to such efforts in Yucata'n. There are important limitations as well in attempting to generalize from the study's findings to Mexicans or Mexican-Americans as a whole. Mexican-Americans

living in the Southwestern portion of the U. S. may in fact be more anglicized than their ethnic counterparts living in areas closer to the Mexican border. Additionally, Yucata'n is a unique and special setting and there are many influences that make it different from the rest of Mexico. Any inferences from this study's results should be made with caution and prudence.

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